



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Natural and Cultural Heritage

Curating Artifacts at Field Stations

*Every field station has its story, its heritage.
How are you protecting and preserving your heritage story?*



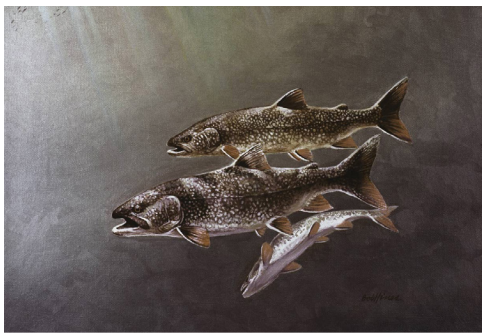
The mission of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) Heritage Committee is to preserve the history of the Service and our predecessor agencies (Bureau of Biological Survey and the Bureau of Fisheries). The Artifacts Subcommittee helps USFWS to preserve artifacts and objects of historical interest dating back to 1871. Via education and outreach, the Subcommittee helps the Service protect and manage natural and cultural heritage.

What's an Artifact?

An artifact is an object made by a human being, typically an item of cultural or historical interest.

Many artifacts are located or found at duty stations. We need your help to identify and preserve objects with historical significance at your station! This may include items that are historical to your site prior to Service management. Artifacts are collected through various methods, such as collected during field surveys on Service-managed lands or collected during Service-led field projects off Service-managed lands with landowner consent, accumulated through day-to-day Service operations, and donated or seized from outside parties by law enforcement or collected from land owners by other federal agencies and transferred to the Service.





Which artifacts should be considered for preservation?

Art:

Artistic materials including paintings (various media); prints and drawings; sculptures; antiques; tapestries

Archives:

Photographs, Service programs, posters, diaries, books, manuals, maps, AV images, electronic documents

History:

Materials related to the Service; the history of its lands, facilities, management, programs (e.g., tools, uniforms, badges, boundary signs, books, historic firearms, waterfowl decoys, furniture)

Biology:

Botanical, zoological collections, animal mounts with scientific value or species if extinct, endangered, or threatened

Geology:

Geophysical specimens and soil, sediment, and rock samples to document landforms or support engineering studies

Paleontology:

Vertebrate, invertebrate, and trace fossils generated from scientific research, sampling and collection on Service-managed lands

For further details on how to preserve an artifact, including step-by-step processes and a full list of authorities and policies, visit <https://www.fws.gov/historicPreservation/mp/index.html>.

If you have further questions regarding a cultural artifact, contact your Regional Archaeologist (see <https://www.fws.gov/HistoricPreservation/contact.html>).

Questions about USFWS artifacts can be directed to your regional Heritage Committee member (<https://training.fws.gov/history/HeritageCommittee.html>) or USFWS Historian Mark Madison at 304.876.7276 or mark_madison@fws.gov.

Quick Tips

These tips offer guidance to USFWS employees in possession of artifacts found at your field station or in the field.

- Know the laws about acquiring and preserving historical objects on and off Service-managed land.
- Accumulate and preserve items with historical significance to your station.
- Have a designated staff member act as a Custodial Property Officer responsible for tracking historical on-station items.
- Have a collections management plan for your station for accessions, deaccessions, and loans.
- Catalog items found on your station in a database, such as Excel spreadsheet, to help determine if the item warrants conservation. Annotate date, time, who found, description of object, condition of object, location of object (GPS coordinates if found in the field).
- Use proper protection and properly store each item and reduce handling. Archival storage materials are ideal. Ensure objects are stored in a climate-controlled area away from hazards such as temperature and humidity fluctuations, pests, geological hazards, weather hazards, and man-made hazards.
- Display exhibit items in a manner that minimizes deterioration or potential for theft or vandalism.
- Protect freestanding exhibit objects or specimens, such as with physical barriers, electronic devices, or staff presence.
- Rotate sensitive exhibit display objects to minimize deterioration.
- If multiples of the same items are found, decide if all or some are worth preserving.
- If you have Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGRPA) related items, contact your Regional Archaeologist for guidance regarding the items.
- Destroy or discard items only after clearing the item as non-historical through your Project Leader or the Heritage Committee. Not sure? Contact history@fws.gov.